

# ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS

## National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

In 1969, the United States Congress enacted the NEPA, the first act of its kind that addressed issues of sustainable development, and brought environmental concerns to the level of national policy. NEPA requires that the social, economic and environmental impacts be identified and analyzed for all federally funded transportation actions that may impact the human or natural environment, and also emphasizes the importance of community involvement in this process. Additionally, NEPA provides a framework for considering impacts of Federal-aid projects, and has also created the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to assist in NEPA-based interpretations. FHWA uses this framework for the simultaneous consideration of all relevant environmental laws and regulations. Impacts considered under NEPA include, but are not limited to:

- Land Use Impacts
- Farmland Impacts
- Social Impacts
- Relocation Impacts
- Economic Impacts
- Pedestrian and Bicyclist Pathways
- Air Quality
- Noise Impacts
- Water Quality Impacts
- Permits
- Wetland Impacts
- Water Body Modifications
- Wildlife Impacts
- Floodplain Impacts
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Coastal Barriers
- Coastal Zone Impacts
- Threatened or Endangered Species
- Historic and Archaeological Impacts
- Hazardous Waste Sites
- Visual Impacts
- Energy
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts

In order to take these impacts into account, an environmental document is prepared for each federally funded project. There are three types of environmental documents, Categorical Exclusions, Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements.

### Categorical Exclusions (CE):

Categorical exclusions are prepared for actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the human environment. These actions are those which:

- Do not involve significant impacts to planned growth or land use
- Do not require the relocation of significant number of people
- Do not significantly impact natural, cultural, recreation or historic resources

- Do not involve significant air, noise, or water quality impacts
- Do not have significant impacts on travel patterns
- Or, do not otherwise have any significant environmental impacts.

#### Environmental Assessments (EA):

Environmental Assessments are interim decision documents prepared for actions where the significance of the social, economic or environmental impacts are not clearly established. If no significant impacts are determined following the development of the document, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is prepared. However, if the proposed impact is determined to cause a significant impact, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prepared. The primary purpose of an EA is to assist the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in determining if an EIS is required.

#### Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Once the decision is reached that a proposed project will cause significant impacts to the human environment, an EIS is required by the NEPA. This document summarizes the major environmental impacts, outlines issues, examines reasonable alternatives and arrives at a Record of Decision (ROD), identifying the selected alternative for the project.

For more information regarding the Environmental Process, please visit:

Federal Highway Administration (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/>)

Indiana Department of Transportation – Office of Environmental Services (<http://www.in.gov/dot/>)

### **OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS**

[Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act](#)

[Community Advisory Committee](#)

[Public Involvement](#)